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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
14 January 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Insurgency Developments in Colombia (REVISED)

1. A well-executed attack on a town in Santander Province in north central Colombia on 7 January by a uniformed guerrilla band may signal the commencement of guerrilla operations similar to those of Venezuela's FALN. The group, reportedly numbering from 25 to 50 men, cut communication lines, attacked a police station and killed three agents, stole about \$5,000, harangued a captive audience with antigovernment and anti-US propaganda, and killed several soldiers while escaping into the mountains.

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2. The armbands worn by the attackers identified them as members of the Army of National Liberation (ELN), which has been organizing in the Colombian countryside for some time.

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4. The ELN action coincides with recent public addresses by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara linking Colombia with Venezuela and Guatemala as countries where "freedom fighters" have the best prospects for success.

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5. Communist and leftist elements in Colombia have until now been unable to organize paramilitary

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groups along the lines of Venezuela's FALN. The rural violence plaguing Colombia since 1948 had not proved to be a good jumping-off point for such a movement, and urban terrorist efforts have been sporadic and uncoordinated. Communist "enclaves" within the country, moreover, have produced only loosely organized groups such as that led by Tiro Fijo, the bandit chieftain in the Marquetalia region.

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In any case, there are indications that the number of army troops committed to this area may be reduced.

7. Rural violence continues elsewhere in Colombia while the government wrestles with acute political and economic problems and labor unrest. Particularly disturbing is a strike threat scheduled for 25 January by Colombia's two largest labor unions in protest against government economic measures. Coming at this time, the ELN attack has made an impact contributing to political instability.

8. Security forces are still considered adequate to deal with the kind of sporadic violence now taking place, but organized terrorism of the sort that the emergence of the ELN seems to portend could severely tax the government's capabilities to maintain stability.

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